

WORKFORCE OBSERVATIONS FOR NORTHWEST WISCONSIN COUNTIES

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State of Wisconsin
Department of Workforce Development

Unemployment Rates Tumble in Northwest Wisconsin

Unemployment rates came tumbling down in the counties of Northwest Wisconsin in May. Every county in the state reported a lower unemployment rate in May but some of the greatest reductions occurred in the counties of the northwest region.

The combined unemployment rate for Northwest Wisconsin dropped from 8.5 percent in April to 5.4 percent in May, matching the rate of one year earlier. In Wisconsin, the unadjusted rate declined from 5.7 in April to 4.5 percent in May while the national rate dropped from 5.7 to 5.5 percent. The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate in Wisconsin was 4.8 percent, a full percentage point lower than the national rate of 5.8 percent.

Seasonal employment patterns are very significant in northern Wisconsin and this year is no exception. Although there are slightly fewer jobs this May than in more recent years the number of employed residents did increase by 2,800.

Out of a total labor force in May of 93,760 in Northwest Wisconsin, 88,650 were working and 5,100 were unemployed. The increase in the number of workers matched the reduction in the number of unemployed. The current estimate for employed is greater than one year ago when there were 86,800 residents with jobs.

Seasonal factors were the reason the unemployment rate in Iron County dropped from 11.9 percent in April to 6.9 percent in May. This produced the second largest decrease in the state. Most of the 170 additional jobs in Iron County were with construction firms and retail trade employers.

An increase in jobs in construction and retail also dominated the job growth in Ashland and Taylor counties. In Ashland County the unemployment rate dropped from 11.8 percent in April to 8.1 percent in May, while in Taylor the rate declined from 7.5 to 4.4 percent. Job seekers in all northwest counties found work in these two industries, and region-wide, construction employment increased by 600 jobs while retail trade employers

added nearly 800 jobs.

The third greatest reduction in unemployment rate in the state was in Bayfield County where unemployment declined from 9.6 to 5.1 percent in May. In Bayfield County the additional jobs were concentrated in retail trade (restaurants, convenience/gas stores, bars) and services (motels, resorts, amusements) industries and reflect the increase in jobs associated with tourism.

Tourism also effected increases in retail trade and services jobs Sawyer and Washburn counties and retail trade growth in Burnett County. In Sawyer County the unemployment rate declined from 7.7 percent to 4.3 percent in May while in Washburn County the rate dropped from 8.8 to 5.3 percent. In Burnett County the rate declined from 8.2 to 4.9 percent.

Manufacturing employment continues to rebound in the northwest but the current estimate of 14,600 jobs is

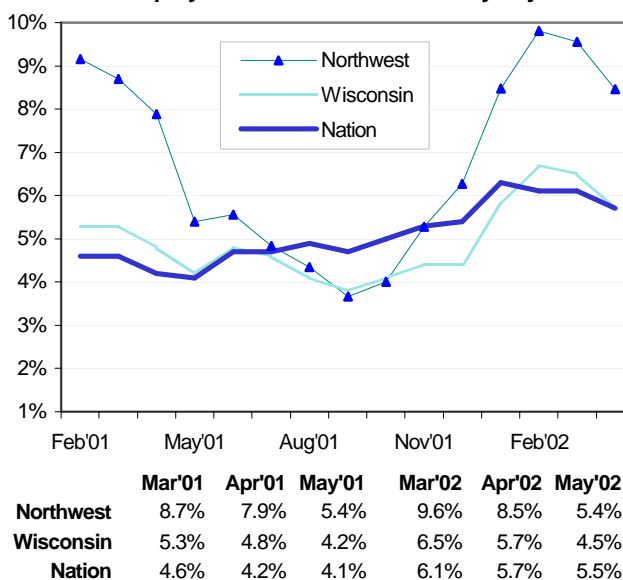
still 100 shy of one year ago and is nearly 300 less than in May 2000, the highest level ever for the month. Two northwest counties with a concentration of manufacturing jobs, Price and Rusk, did post lower unemployment rates but the reductions were among the weakest of the regional counties. In Price County the rate declined from 7.8 percent in April to 5.1 percent in May, while in Rusk County the rate dropped from 9.2 to 6.8 percent.

Douglas County had the smallest increase in total jobs and the least decline in unemployment rate

among the northwest counties. The loss of nearly 300 jobs in government negated those added by construction firms and retail trade employers. The unemployment rate in Douglas County declined from 7.1 percent in April to 5.3 percent in May. The increase in total employment exceeds the increase in jobs with local employers as many residents cross the bridge for work.

A typical May brings roughly 2,400 additional jobs to the ten-county region and three industries gener-

Unemployment Rates-Not seasonally adjusted



ally account for 75 percent those jobs: construction, retail trade, and services. The seasonal increase in manufacturing jobs begins in May but occurs primarily in June. The increase in May was less than half the five-year average. Most production workers qualify for unemployment insurance benefits when they are laid off and the number of weekly claims filed by area residents is declining.

Claims for unemployment compensation benefits declined by nearly 1,900 from the survey week in April to mid-May when 3,598 residents received a benefit check. Claims for unemployment compensation benefits continued to decline to 2,977 in mid-June but are still higher than one year ago.

May 2002 Estimates	Wisconsin	Ashland	Bayfield	Burnett	Douglas	Iron	Price	Rusk	Sawyer	Taylor	Washburn
Civilian Labor Force*	3,040,400	8,200	7,600	7,300	23,300	3,600	6,900	7,300	10,400	10,900	8,300
Employed	2,902,700	7,500	7,200	6,900	22,100	3,300	6,600	6,800	10,000	10,400	7,900
Unemployed	137,700	700	400	400	1,200	200	300	500	500	500	400
Unemployment rate(%)	4.5%	8.1%	5.1%	4.9%	5.3%	6.9%	5.1%	6.8%	4.3%	4.4%	5.3%
Total jobs, all industries**	2,844,630	8,700	4,120	4,780	19,200	2,540	6,480	6,150	7,510	9,310	6,330
Construction & Mining	129,850	330	260	280	1,070	350	220	200	400	450	280
Manufacturing	564,110	1,690	210	1,040	1,180	470	2,510	2,330	800	3,220	1,120
Transportation & Pbl.Util.	132,670	280	250	150	2,770	60	120	220	190	570	240
Wholesale Trade	138,220	170	40	30	1,180	60	130	140	130	440	180
Retail Trade	505,750	1,570	770	1,030	4,000	580	1,040	750	1,900	1,500	1,410
Finance,Ins,Real Estate	152,130	350	140	180	510	30	210	130	310	370	210
Services	794,370	2,430	850	770	5,430	490	1,170	930	1,780	1,680	1,420
Government	427,530	1,880	1,590	1,320	3,070	500	1,070	1,460	2,000	1,090	1,460

Change from previous month

Civilian Labor Force*	-5,900	0	0	100	-100	100	-100	-100	200	-100	100
Employed	30,400	300	300	300	400	200	100	100	600	200	400
Unemployed	-36,300	-300	-300	-200	-500	-200	-200	-200	-300	-300	-300
Unemployment rate(%)	-1.2%	-3.8%	-4.5%	-3.3%	-1.8%	-5.1%	-2.7%	-2.4%	-3.4%	-3.0%	-3.5%
Total jobs, all industries**	35,060	210	330	260	20	170	100	50	460	260	280
Construction & Mining	11,590	60	40	30	120	80	30	20	50	130	50
Manufacturing	1,430	0	10	20	-40	20	0	20	20	40	30
Transportation & Pbl.Util.	1,910	10	30	0	50	10	0	0	10	10	0
Wholesale Trade	1,410	0	0	0	40	0	0	0	0	0	10
Retail Trade	8,240	60	120	80	90	40	30	10	180	60	110
Finance,Ins,Real Estate	720	0	0	50	10	0	0	0	10	10	0
Services	11,480	40	80	30	20	10	10	10	180	30	80
Government	-1,730	30	50	50	-270	20	30	-10	10	-20	10

Change from one year ago

Civilian Labor Force*	62,300	200	0	-100	700	200	-100	300	500	300	0
Employed	49,100	0	0	-200	600	100	200	100	600	300	100
Unemployed	13,200	100	0	0	200	0	-300	100	0	0	0
Unemployment rate(%)	0.3%	1.0%	-0.4%	0.1%	0.7%	0.0%	-3.0%	1.3%	-0.6%	-0.3%	0.2%
Total jobs, all industries**	1,330	-120	200	-160	520	80	50	110	510	320	-100
Construction & Mining	20	-10	20	20	50	30	20	-20	30	-10	20
Manufacturing	-21,930	-110	10	30	-110	0	50	30	-10	140	-140
Transportation & Pbl.Util.	-3,550	-10	20	0	330	0	0	0	0	30	-10
Wholesale Trade	350	-10	-10	-10	40	0	-10	10	-10	-20	10
Retail Trade	3,930	0	30	10	180	10	20	10	220	40	10
Finance,Ins,Real Estate	2,470	10	0	20	0	0	0	0	10	20	-10
Services	17,060	-130	-30	-100	340	-10	-20	30	150	100	50
Government	2,970	-90	180	-120	-320	50	0	60	110	20	-20

* Includes participants residing in area. ** Includes employment with employers located in area. Estimates are NOT seasonally adjusted. Current month estimates are preliminary. Totals may not add due to rounding. Calculations based on unrounded numbers.

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